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Allen, fellow Senators introduce new legislation to combat emerald ash borer, invasive plant species

LANSING – Michigan would be better protected against invasive insects such as emerald ash borers, and plant species like Eurasian milfoil and hydrilla under legislation introduced today in the Michigan Senate, announced Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City.

“We are dedicated to protecting and preserving our environment,” Allen said. “These bills are a step in the right direction.”

The bipartisan legislative package would:

- Identify prohibited insects and aquatic plant species such as the emerald ash borer and the Asian longhorned beetle, which both threaten Michigan’s tree population;
- Prohibit the release and introduction of certain insects and aquatic plant species;
- Amend the Natural Resources and Protection Act to recognize the existence of and prohibit genetically engineered or non-native aquatic plants;
- Require the Department of Natural Resources to post requirements and penalties on their website; and
- Establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council and specify duties of the council.

Sponsored by Allen, the advisory council would establish criteria for identifying infested waterways and make recommendations regarding the state’s efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

“This package expands on the prohibitions we enacted last year against non-native fish species,” Allen said. “These bills are necessary and crucial to protecting Michigan’s natural habitat. We need to reduce and eliminate the presence of foreign species like the emerald ash borer that are destroying our environment.”

With the recent discovery of emerald ash borer in portions of Emmet, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim and Grand Traverse counties, this legislative package will help combat this threat to northern Michigan’s environment.

The Great Lakes Conservation Task Force Report, issued in 2002, made broad recommendations for important steps that the state should take to protect our water quality. One of the most important recommendations was to implement laws that will guard against further invasion of both non native fish and plants.